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**SUPREME COURT JUSTICES TO ADDRESS NEW LAW STUDENTS ON
CIVILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM**

Law schools in Illinois begin welcoming their new students this month and something different is on the program for the students' orientation.

As start of a continuing program on the part of the Special Supreme Court Committee on Professionalism, justices of the Supreme Court of Illinois will attend at least one orientation session and administer to the incoming students an "Oath of Professionalism." The Committee also has encouraged and is helping to facilitate additional orientation sessions for the incoming students on questions of ethics and professionalism.

The idea behind the oath and the workshops on professionalism stems from a belief among justices of the Illinois Supreme Court that one of the most effective ways of improving professionalism among lawyers is to begin at the earliest steps with new lawyers.

"The Supreme Court created this special committee to study and recommend ways to promote respectful conduct within the profession," said Chief Justice Mary Ann G. McMorrow. "One of the ways to achieve that goal is to introduce the concepts of courtesy, integrity and honesty to first-year law students."

Justice Robert R. Thomas initiated the idea of the committee among his colleagues, serves as Supreme Court liaison with the Committee and was the first justice to address an incoming freshman law class last week at Northern Illinois University during its orientation on August 12.

"You hear a lot about how the practice of law is different now than in days past when a lawyer's handshake meant something and a lawyer's word was his bond," said Justice Thomas. "That may be an oversimplification. But in this day and age with competition in the profession for dollars and clients, activities sometimes degenerate into a Rambo-style, win-at-all cost attitude by attorneys."

"That's what we're trying to correct with this committee. The first step is what you're seeing now, reaching law students at the earliest stage."

Justice Thomas said the Committee won't have all the answers, but there is at least "a legitimate

MORE

Civility Add One

attempt being made by attorneys and judges who think the profession needs to take some of the tarnish off the reputation of attorneys.”

David F. Rolewick, chairman of the committee and a Wheaton-based attorney, welcomed the opportunity to introduce new law students to the issues of professionalism and civility.

“The most important thing a lawyer has is his reputation, his ability to be trusted as an individual,” Mr. Rolewick said. “If we don’t start teaching that in the first year of law school, we lose a tremendous opportunity. “The Supreme Court understands the importance of this and has pushed this idea very hard. It asked us to begin the education program on professionalism for law students as soon as we could.”

The Committee, which was formed by the Court in November 2001, also plans a series of town hall meetings with attorneys, judges and community representatives examining the need for professionalism and ways to achieve it. These meetings will begin with a forum in Peoria scheduled for September 10, and forums to follow in other Illinois cities, including Carbondale, Collinsville, Urbana and Chicago.

The Oath of Professionalism is modeled after one that had been given to students at Southern Illinois University School of Law. It reads in part: “As I begin the study of law . . . I commit myself to service without prejudice, integrity without compromise, and the diligent performance of my duties with the utmost good faith. I acknowledge that I will be a zealous advocate, but will act with courtesy and cooperation towards others . . . and will approach my colleagues and adversaries alike with the same integrity, professionalism and civility which I expect from them.”

Here is a schedule of the events:

August 20: Justice Rita B. Garman at the University of Illinois College of Law at 9:45 a.m.; Justice Charles E. Freeman at the John Marshall Law School at 2 p.m.; and Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald at Chicago-Kent College of Law Illinois Institute of Technology beginning at 4 p.m.

August 21: Justice Fitzgerald addressing a second section at John Marshall Law School at 5:30 p.m.

August 22: Chief Justice Mary Ann G. McMorrow at Loyola University School of Law.

In September, Chief Justice McMorrow will address incoming students at Northwestern University School of Law, Justice Philip J. Rarick will address students at Southern Illinois University School of Law; Appellate Justice Anne M. Burke will address new students at De Paul University College of Law. The University of Chicago will participate later in the fall.

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